

City, JPL reach water cleanup deal

By JOHN FLECK
Staff Writer

PASADENA — City and Jet Propulsion Laboratory officials have reached "a verbal understanding" over JPL's role in paying the multimillion dollar cost of cleaning up groundwater believed to have been polluted by the laboratory in the 1950s and 1960s, City Manager Don McIntyre said Wednesday.

The deal tentatively was approved by the Pasadena Board of City Directors on Tuesday in a closed-door session, but neither side would release any details, saying the agreement still must be committed to writing by the two institutions' legal and technical staffs before it can be made public.

"Now we've got to work out details," JPL general counsel Donald Fowler said.

After more than two years of study, city officials are ready to begin designing a cleanup plant, but are awaiting an agreement with JPL before they proceed.

Such a plant, which would use carbon to filter out the the potentially cancer-causing chemicals from the water, could cost anywhere from \$2.3 million to \$4 million, with an additional \$478,500 to \$866,000 per year to operate the system, according to a study conducted for the city.

Currently, four city wells in the area south of JPL have been shut down because of potential-

ly dangerous levels of carbon tetrachloride, perchloroethylene and trichloroethylene, three chemicals used as industrial solvents and linked to cancer.

Traces of the chemicals in the wells were first discovered in January 1980, but they did not rise above state-mandated safety levels until 1985, when the first city well had to be shut down as the pollutants moved south through the underground aquifer.

The aquifer, like a giant underground sponge, is important to Pasadena because it provides about 40 percent of the city's water.

The city has studied the option of abandoning the wells and buying more water imported from the Colorado River and Northern California, but it would be more costly and would allow the pollutants to continue moving south underground, contaminating more wells as they go.

According to a study funded jointly by the city and JPL, the pollutants are likely to have come from chemicals dumped by the laboratory in the 1950s and 1960s in cesspools and pits near the east end of the facility.

The study did not explicitly name JPL as the culprit, and the NASA-funded facility has never formally admitted blame, but has helped pay for the cleanup studies that have been going on since 1986.

from previous page

logical leadership but also in the establishment of bases and stations that can be used for future space projects. In order to ease the costs, the U.S. should encourage as much participation as possible by foreign governments. The Soviets, Europeans and Japanese all have active space programs, and duplication of efforts will increasingly be seen as an unnecessary waste. Many countries are

interested in participating in the Freedom project or Mission to Planet Earth or both, and the Soviets have accepted

international help on their Mars probes.

NASA's budget will have to be raised to pay for such an ambitious program, perhaps even doubled from its current \$11 billion a year. That will be hard in an era of budget deficits. But there is support for a Mars mission in both the House and the Senate. If the President comes out strongly for the mission, Congress should be able to

Editor's Viewpoint...

Our Jet Lab Hailed As a National Treasure

THE JET PROPULSION LABORATORY of La Canada Flintridge is back in the limelight, or starlight I should say, as a Voyager spacecraft will provide our first close-up look at Neptune next month.

The jet lab has kept all of us well informed on this momentous event and it was drawn into focus by the lead article Sunday in the Los Angeles Times Book Review. Former astronaut Michael Collins reviewed "Journey Into Space — The First Three Decades of Space Exploration" by Bruce Murray who was director of the lab from 1976 to 1982.

There is a mistake in the overall heading which reads "From Pasadena to Neptune" when it should read "From La Canada Flintridge to Neptune" and the very first word of the review is in error when it states "Pasadena's Jet Propulsion Laboratory..." But it is a good review and the author is intent on matters other than terrestrial geography so, somewhat grudgingly, we forgive him.

It is lamentable, however, that his is a mistake made too often by too many.

★ ★ ★

I CAN'T RESIST the temptation to digress for a moment here as I made an intriguing, and coincidental, discovery just last Friday when cleaning out one of my office files. It's astonishing what you turn up in such rummaging.

Here was the copy of an editorial someone had sent me, clipped from the Pasadena Star News of March 9, 1976, rather pathetically entitled "JPL is in Pasadena." This was at the time that the fate of La Canada Flintridge as a city, as opposed to annexation to Pasadena, was being decided.

The editorial stated that Pasadena had decided to annex all of JPL because the La Canada Flintridge incorporation group had decided to add a bulge on the eastern side of their map to take in JPL. This is silly, the writer declared, as everyone knows that the jet lab is in Pasadena and the then city manager was quoted as saying "... to

see next page

find a way to fund it. One option: to siphon the money from Star Wars and other questionable defense programs.

The U.S. cannot remain a leading force in technology, industry and science unless it is in the forefront of space exploration. Throughout its history, America has been a nation of discoverers and achievers. If it fails to take the next major step in space, it will have given up an essential part of its national character.

—Reported by Glenn Garelik/
Washington and Richard Woodbury/Houston